

# SLG

## ARCHITECTURAL PRESS INFORMATION ABOUT THE FIRE STATION



**Images:** Left – South London Gallery Fire Station, Exterior View, 2018. Photo: Johan Dehlin, Courtesy 6a architects. Right – Peckham Road Fire Station, 1905. London Metropolitan Archives, City of London

### Overview

The Fire Station annexe designed by 6a architects opened in September 2018. The building enables the South London Gallery (SLG) to expand its internationally acclaimed contemporary exhibitions, education and events programmes, furthering its reputation for bringing new work by established and lesser known artists to an area of London with a fascinating local history. In 2019, the renovation won RIBA National and RIBA London Awards.

Originally built in 1867, London's oldest surviving purpose-built fire station was donated to the SLG by an anonymous benefactor in 2014. A year later, 6a architects won the contract to restore the derelict building and transform it into an inspiring new centre for contemporary art.

6a first worked with the SLG when they were commissioned to refurbish a derelict Victorian house neighbouring the gallery. The extension, which opened to the public in June 2010, doubled the size of the SLG through the creation of additional gallery spaces, a flat for a programme of artist residencies, a café, the Clore education studio at the rear of the site and the Fox Garden. Since then visitor numbers have increased from 25 000 to 130 000 per year. Most recently, 6a worked with the SLG and the artist on creating the Orozco Garden, transforming a largely inaccessible paved area of land at the back of the SLG's main building into a unique sculptural work that incorporates a new gallery entrance directly from Sceaux Gardens Estate.

Steph Macdonald: “Over many years now the SLG and 6a have worked together on a gradually evolving ‘campus’ bringing together a variety of different buildings and outdoor spaces. There has been a consistent emphasis on developing the whole site, with external spaces being as integral to the artistic programmes and experience of visiting the SLG as the internal spaces. The gallery has literally spread out into the local area where it has been creating connections with residents since its inception.”

6a’s designs for the Fire Station retain the special character of this Grade II listed building, which originally provided accommodation for fire brigade officers and their families and to house appliances, horses and equipment. They have maintained the original layout of the rooms as far as possible to retain the sense of a big house with civic intentions, adjusting openings and circulation to bring long views and light through the new spaces.

The inspiring, light-filled development includes new exhibition galleries, an archive, communal kitchen, education space and artist’s studio. Arranged over four floors, the building will provide 425 square metres of public space doubling the SLG’s footprint. It includes restoration of the historic façade, the creation of a dramatic new entrance hall and stair. The ground and first floor will always be open to the public with the second and third floors providing flexible spaces for events, exhibitions and education projects as well as an artist’s studio.

### **Façade**

The north façade facing directly onto Peckham Road has been repaired and restored. 6a made the decision to not clean the exterior bricks as the original gault white brick would feel too bright if cleaned back.

The original cobbled forecourt has been repaired. On the ground floor the opening engine appliance room doors have been reinstated. The windows have been restored across the front elevation with secondary glazing to enhance the building’s thermal and acoustic performance. Windows on the rear have been upgraded with double glazing.

A historic photograph of the building from 1905 shows a lamp fixed to the building at first floor level. A replica of the lamp will be installed on the original wrought-iron bracket.

### **Ground Floor – Entrance and Shop**

As visitors enter the Fire Station via large double doors on the right hand side of the building, they will have a clear view through the reception and shop to the south-facing rear garden. In what used to be a deep external passageway for the engine horses to reach stables. There is now a new double-height entrance and a white, perforate steel staircase leading to the first, second and third floors, lit by a new skylight and windows.

The original external brick chevron floor converging on a central gutter has been retained, these would have previously provided grip for horses hooves and allow water to drain easily.

A small retail space designed in collaboration with James Tattersall is made-up of a series of loose fit modular painted timber units that showcase limited editions and products to compliment the larger gallery bookshop.

An accessible lift in the centre of the building takes visitors up to all floors.

### **Ground Floor – The Archive**

The Archive is a clean white space with parquet flooring and windows overlooking a small garden.

The SLG's extensive archive of its 127 year history will be available to the public for the first time both digitally and through changing displays of original material relating to the social, architectural and cultural history of the local area.

### **Ground Floor – Gallery 1**

The largest of the three Fire Station galleries is suited for the display of large-scale artworks and projections having been the original engine room for two vehicles.

Gallery 1 along with the domestic scale exhibition spaces upstairs will be the setting for solo and group shows throughout the year.

### **First Floor – Galleries 2 & 3**

Two domestic sized galleries (positioned either side of a lift shaft) have been designed to be flexible depending on the nature of the displays.

Accessible bathrooms and family changing areas have been created on the first, second and third floors.

### **Second Floor – The Kitchen & Terrace**

A communal kitchen and terrace on the second floor will enable the SLG to build on the rich history of artists' projects linking art, culture and cooking whilst linking back to the Fire Station's original kitchen in which the firemen and their families cooked and ate together.

### **Second Floor – Gallery 4**

Opposite the communal kitchen, a fourth gallery will be used flexibly throughout the year for exhibitions and community projects.

### **Third Floor – The Studio & The Attic**

In the gables of the Fire Station will be a studio for artists undertaking residencies at the gallery and an additional education space providing much-needed new facilities for our extensive learning programmes.

Windows in the roof allow the spaces to be naturally lit.

### **Carbon Consumption**

With internal insulation and controlled heat-recovery air supply to gallery spaces, the environmental performance of the building is greatly improved.

**Architects:** 6a architects

**Structural Engineers:** Eckersley O'Callaghan

**M&E Engineers:** Serge Lai

**QS:** Stockdale

**Garden Design:** Non Morris at Fraser&Morris

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About 6a architects**

6a architects was founded by Tom Emerson and Stephanie Macdonald in 2001. The practice is best known for its contemporary art galleries, educational buildings, artists' studios and residential projects, often in sensitive historic environments. 6a architects gained recognition with the completion of two critically acclaimed public art galleries, Raven Row (2009), which won an RIBA Award in 2011, and the expanded South London Gallery (2010). Recently completed projects include Black Stone Building (2017), a new apartment building in North London, arts and fashion centre Blue Mountain School (2018) and a warehouse conversion for storage and display of a private art collection. The 68-room hall of residence at Churchill College, Cambridge (2016) garnered an RIBA East Award (2017), and a new studio complex for photographer Juergen Teller (2016) was winner of several RIBA awards and was shortlisted for the Stirling Prize 2017. Due for completion in 2018 are the practice's expansions of MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, and the South London Gallery Fire Station. 6a architects has received multiple nominations for the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies Van der Rohe Award (2011, 2013 & 2015) and in 2012 was awarded the Erich Schelling Medal for Architecture. Tom Emerson was recently awarded the Conrad Ferdinand Meyer Prize 2018 for his work with ETH in Zürich, only the second architect to receive the prize since its inaugural year of 1938. 6a.co.uk

### **About the South London Gallery**

The South London Gallery (SLG) was founded in the 19th century by philanthropist William Rossiter to 'bring art to the people of south London'. Today the gallery comprises its original site at 65 Peckham Road; the Fire Station, which opens to the public in September 2018; Art Block, a space for local children and families on Sceaux Gardens Estate and an artist-designed garden.

The SLG has an international reputation for its contemporary art exhibitions by established, mid-career and younger artists and programme of film and performance events. It's highly regarded, free education programme includes a peer-led young people's forum; family workshops; artist-led projects and commissions on local housing estates; and a BBC Children in Need-funded programme for looked after children.

The South London Gallery is a registered charity which raises more than half of its income from trusts and foundations, sponsors and fundraising events.

## **HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE FIRE STATION**

- Camberwell Fire Station, as this building was originally called, was built in 1867 and is the earliest surviving purpose-built fire station in London. The station was renamed in 1906 as Peckham Road Fire Station. The Fire Station was constructed at the same time as a station at Westminster that has since been demolished.
- The architect for the Peckham Road Fire Station was Edward Cresy Jr (1824-70), a surveyor and civil engineer. Cresy Jr was one of a number of architects commissioned to build new fire stations after the formation of London's Metropolitan Fire Brigade in 1866.
- Functions of the newly-founded Metropolitan Fire Brigade are readable in the architecture of the building, in particular the appliance bays and accommodation on the upper storeys.
- The building was designed to provide accommodation for fire brigade officers and their families and to house appliances, horses and equipment. The 1881 census records five firemen, an engineer and a coachman in residence at the fire station. By 1911, this had increased to 27 residents, including the Station Officer along with his wife and four children, eight firemen, two coachmen, the sub-officer and his wife, a fireman and his wife, a fireman with a wife and two children and a coachman with a wife and one child. All these people occupied a total of 15 rooms. Some of them may have been accommodated in out-buildings.
- The station was used by the London Fire Brigade until 1925 when a new building was constructed on the corner site next door. This was opened on 9 July 1925 and was built to meet the new requirements of the shift system.
- This was replaced by the present Peckham Road Fire Station, which opened on the adjoining site in 1990.
- In more recent history the former Fire Station building housed the administrative and factory space of Kennedy's Sausages. The business occupied the building for many years.
- In 1991 the building was awarded Grade II listed status.
- In 2014 the building was registered on the English Heritage 'At Risk' register.